

COLLEAGUES OFFER A FINAL SALUTE TO CHAIRWOMAN MILLENDER-MCDONALD

Immediate Release

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(Washington, DC) In an emotional gathering that brought together family members, Congressional colleagues, Hill staffers, and sorority sisters, the late Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald was fondly remembered today in a service at Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol. Rep. Diane Watson presided over the ceremony, calling it a "celebration of life" for her colleague. After a solemn prayer by Rep. Emanuel Cleaver and a scripture reading by Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee, Rep. Watson spoke of the close friendship she shared with the gentlewoman from California.

"Congresswoman

Juanita Millender-McDonald left a legacy of dedicated service to her constituents, colleagues, and people of the United States. As the historic first African-American female to chair a committee of the House of Representatives, Juanita used her position as Chairwoman of the House Administration Committee to correct oversights from the past and initiate new programs. She has established a lasting legacy through her many good works. I salute Juanita in spirit as I did in life," she said. Congresswoman Watson then noted that she and Millender-McDonald were members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and called on International President Barbara McKinzie who praised the Member's dedication to the public service organization.

There was also a strong showing at today's service by Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who stood as their Chair, Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick spoke on their behalf. "Today's memorial service encapsulated the style and grace of my colleague, my friend, Representative Juanita Millender-McDonald. Our Congress and our caucus are better places because of Rep. McDonald's dedication to service. Therefore, we will continue to uphold her legacy and her love for America," she said.

The service continued with remarks from Rep. Millender-McDonald's colleague and neighbor, Rep David Dreier, who said, "Juanita Millender-McDonald was a woman who always comported herself with extraordinary dignity. She taught us how to live, and she also taught us how to die." Following Congressman Dreier's salute, the mourners were visibly moved by an emotional musical rendition by Officer Melissa Recchiuti of the Capitol Police. Valerie McDonald, the Chairwoman's daughter, thanked everyone for their presence at today's service, and for all of the warm messages and kind gestures of sympathy extended to the family over the past few weeks.

The House leadership made a strong statement of support with its presence, beginning with Majority Whip James Clyburn who said of his colleague, "Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald was known for her spirit and commitment to this body through her work as Chairwoman of the House Administration Committee, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, among other groups. She was highly regarded for her work on correct voting irregularities and voter disenfranchisement, ending human trafficking, defending women's rights across the globe, and stopping genocide in Cambodia, Darfur and other countries where human rights are threatened."

Rep. Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader of the House, gave the gentlewoman from California high praise when he said, "Juanita personified what it means to serve others before serving yourself. To the people of California's 37th District - as well as everyone who had the pleasure of knowing her during her time in the People's House - Juanita was an inspiration - someone who never allowed the conventions of the world around her to dictate the role she would play. She was a pioneer in every sense of the word, and she will be deeply missed."

The final tribute came from Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who spoke of Chairwoman Millender-McDonald's grace, class, and effectiveness as a legislator. "Millions of people around the world have lost an advocate for justice. Juanita spoke out forcefully against the genocide in Darfur and was a powerful advocate for the rise of women everywhere," Pelosi said.

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